

been some suggestions made that it is a religious matter. I presume that some of the decisions on both sides are made on the basis of a religious conviction.

The question is certainly a human rights matter without question. Fundamentally it is a power question. I will deal with some of the other questions in more detail a little later. It is an economic, sociological, educational and political matter. This piece of legislation cannot be. We cannot get ourselves involved in a criminal matter in so far as this issue is concerned.

• (1930)

It is a health matter in more ways than one. I would suggest that one of the most important aspects of it being a health matter is again that it is women. Why is it that in this human history of ours throughout the ages it is always women who become the victims as a result of decisions which are for the most part made by men?

Also, in so far as women are concerned and as far as the matter before us is concerned, it is a matter of rich and poor, and that is not an unusual question to be coming before this House. There are many, many things which seem to be predicated on privilege. The obvious fact is that if a woman has access to any degree of wealth, she will be able to have an abortion regardless of what is decided in this House. She will be able to have a safe abortion, perhaps not even in this country. But if she has the financial wherewithal she will be able to avail herself of a safe abortion.

That is not the case with those women who do not have much money, who do not have the financial ability to perhaps go to another province or to go to another country. Sometimes, certainly in the past, it has meant going far beyond the borders of Canada to procure something which, undoubtedly, for their psychological, mental and physical health was a necessity, but again we have injected into this discussion the whole matter of the rich and the poor.

I do not think too much has to be said about the religious connotations. Wherever religious connotations arise, I would suggest that in Canada, being a nation where church and state are essentially separate, that a religious discussion should not inject itself into the discussion in the Parliaments of this country.

Government Orders

As I mentioned, human rights are involved because I do not think the issue is abortion; the issue is the freedom to choose. The issue is the freedom of a woman to choose and the freedom not to have to be beholden to a man when she makes that choice.

I mentioned that power was an element in the discussion and this relates back to the matter of being able to choose. As the advertisement in the paper said, there is no way that a man should be able to exercise that kind of power over a woman, be he a husband or a boyfriend.

We have seen in one case this summer where that was precisely an element in what was probably the most severe distress a woman has suffered publicly in Canada for a long while. I would suggest that such a spectacle is something which surely most Canadians would have found abhorrent and would in all senses wish not to see repeated. There is an element of power in this which has to be recognized, and it is one of the main reasons why this legislation should simply not be put through.

The proposed legislation states that a woman may have an abortion if she can demonstrate physical, psychological or mental reasons for having it done. I would suggest that most Canadian women who are going to have an abortion in reality are psychologically very sound mentally and physically. In order to have the abortion they are going to have to lie and perhaps drag the physician into the matter as well, which introduces the element of criminality as far as the legislation is concerned.

I do not think that this legislation ought to be enacted, something which will stigmatize half the population of Canada permanently in law. I would strongly suggest that this legislation should be defeated.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Tétreault (Laval-des-Rapides): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of abortion, I am of two minds and, while appreciating one another, the two minds cannot really agree. One of those minds belongs to the member of Parliament who, being at the same time a lawyer recognizes the government has an obligation to fill a legal vacuum with something acceptable. The other is that of the man, the father, for whom life transcends every law. In other terms, Mr. Speaker, while recognizing that a bill is needed, I deplore the need for one.